



Bureau of Law Enforcement Hunter Recruitment and Retention and Shooting Sports Programs *FY2013 Annual Report*

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has a long history of promoting safe and accessible hunting and shooting. In response to trends indicating a decline in the number of hunters in the future, WDNR has implemented a number of strategies to encourage participation in hunting and the shooting sports. For example, wardens and some wildlife staff are encouraged to include mentoring and organizing events in their annual work plans, and Hunting and Shooting Sports Coordinator position was added in 2011 to coordinate initiatives including the Learn to Hunt and Shooting Sports programs. This report summarizes the efforts of numerous wardens and wildlife staff, in addition to the many volunteers and mentors, whose contributions made the FY2013 Learn to Hunt and Shooting Sports program accomplishments possible.

Mission

Promote and guarantee Wisconsin's hunting heritage by ensuring that all citizens have access to hunting through effective recruitment and retention techniques.

Vision

In partnership with the current generation of hunters, enhance the hunting heritage, the hunter's role in conservation, and contribute to Wisconsin's future economic vitality by recruiting the next generation of hunters.

Goal

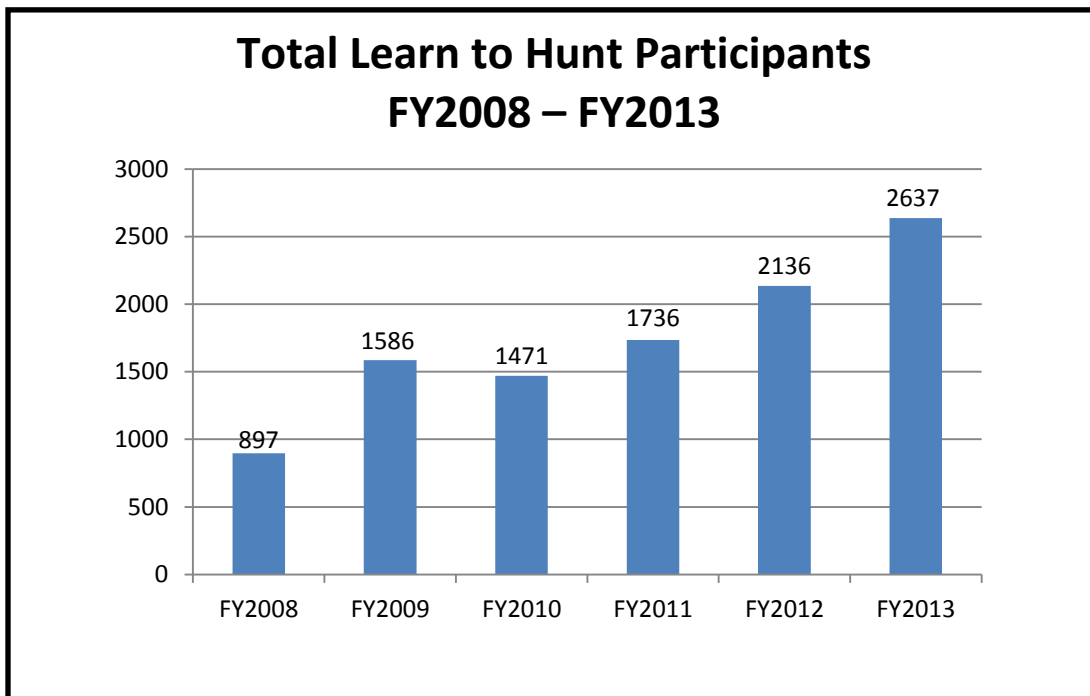
Slow the anticipated decline of hunter numbers and improve access for hunters and recreational shooters to safe local shooting by partnering with stakeholders.

Evaluation of Annual Objectives

Learn to Hunt (LTH) Participation

Objective: Increase number of LTH participants by 5%.

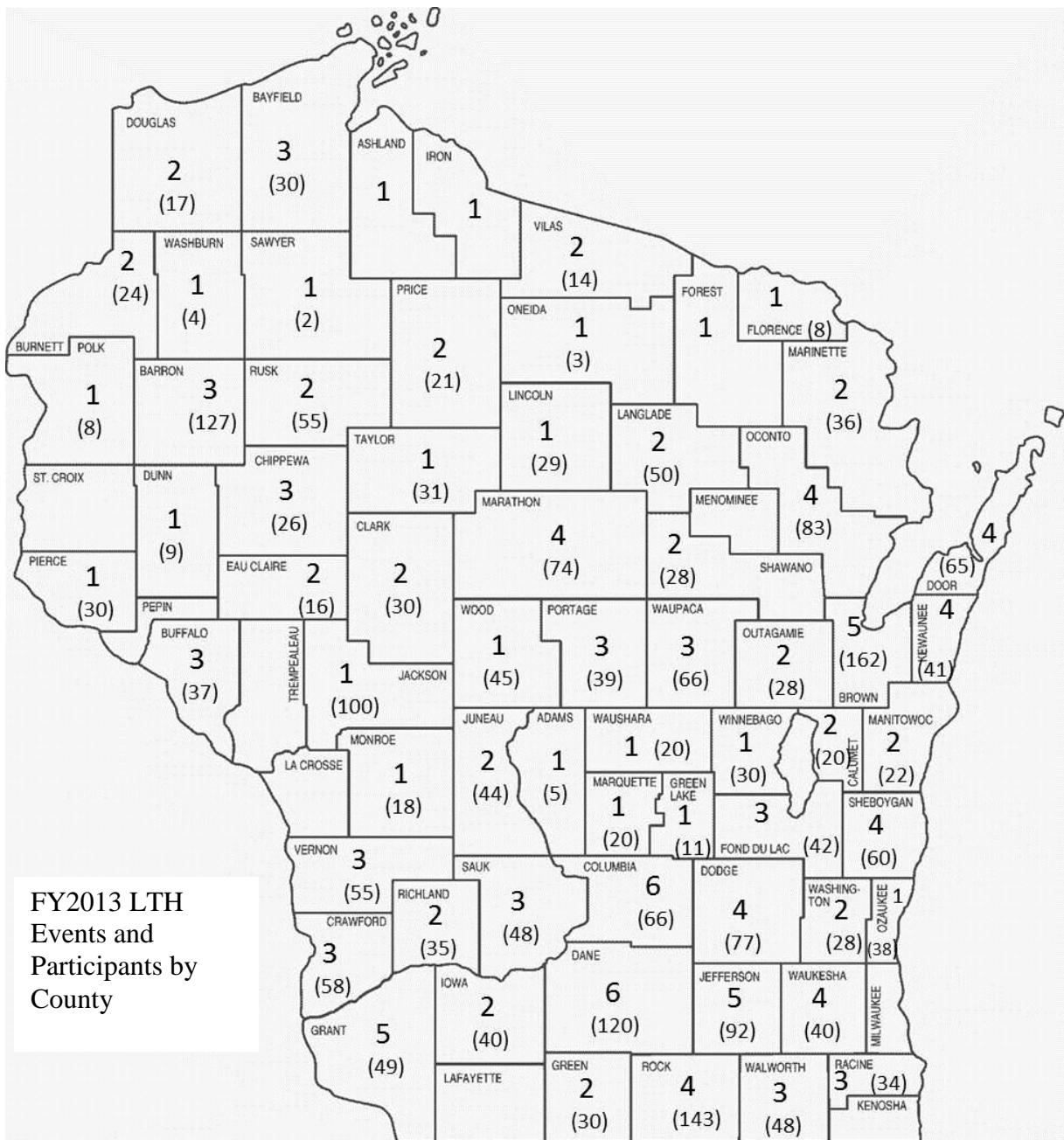
Results: The number of LTH participants increased by 23% from FY2012 to FY2013, with 2,637 hunters attending a LTH event in FY2013.



Learn to Hunt Event Location

Objective: One LTH event in every county or adjacent county or alternative outdoor recreational event.

Results: During FY2013, 150 LTH events were held in 64 of Wisconsin's 72 counties (89%), meeting the objective. If you would like to help, consider holding a LTH event next year in one of the counties not represented in FY2013, including Kenosha, Lacrosse, Lafayette, Menominee, Milwaukee, Pepin, St. Croix, and Trempeleau Counties



Learn to Hunt Female Participation

Objective: Increase number of female LTH participants by 5%.

Results: In FY2012, 449 of the total LTH participants were females. In FY2013, the number of female LTH participants increased to 751. Female participation in LTH events increased 40% from FY2012 to FY2013.

Sustainable Foods LTH Events

With increasing interest in reducing the environmental impacts associated with growing and raising our food, efforts have been directed at introducing adults to hunting as a way to utilize renewable resources to obtain quality free-range protein.

Objective: To increase sustainable foods LTH events.

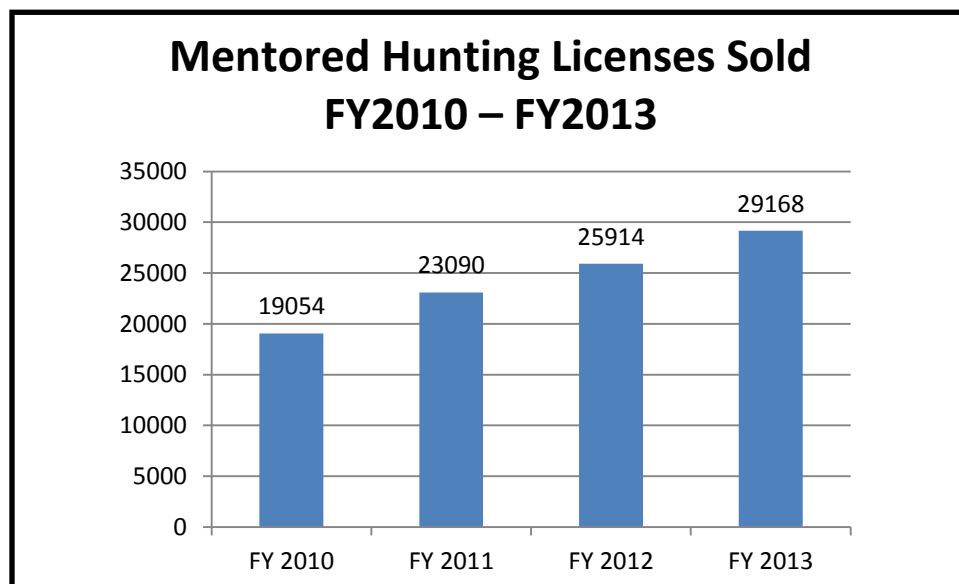
Results: 4 coop events were held in FY13, with over 40 adult participants.

Mentored Hunting

Since September 1, 2009, anyone 10 and older may hunt in Wisconsin without first completing a hunter education course if he or she is accompanied by a licensed hunter (mentor), hunts within arm's reach of the mentor, and follows other program rules. This one-on-one opportunity gives first-time hunters a chance to try hunting in a safe situation and enables veteran hunters to pass on their passion for the outdoors.

Objective: Increase number of mentor licenses by 2%

Results: Just over 29,000 mentored hunting licenses were sold in Wisconsin during FY2013, a 13% increase over FY2012. The number of mentored hunting licenses sold has increased 53% since the program began in FY2010. However, the annual increases appear to be slowing as the program ages.



Shooting Sports Programs

Objective: Hold 5 shooting sports programs.

Results: At least 10 events were held statewide in FY2013. These events happened all over the state and have been very successful

Multicultural LTH events

Objective: Increase multicultural LTH events

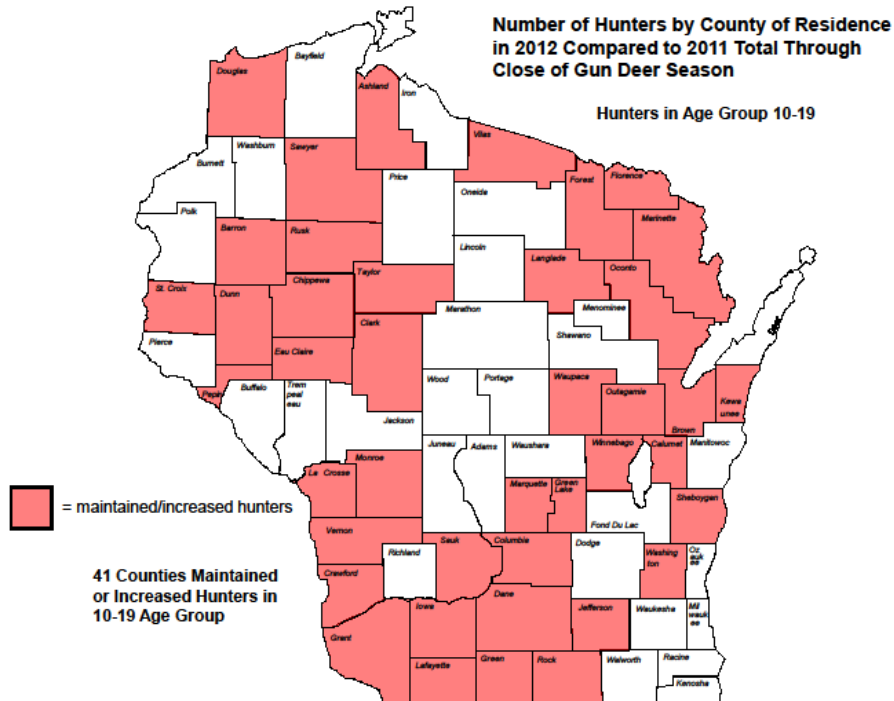
Results: 4 LTH events were held FY2013. 2 squirrel, 1 small game, and 1 pheasant event were held in cooperation with Hmong American sports clubs

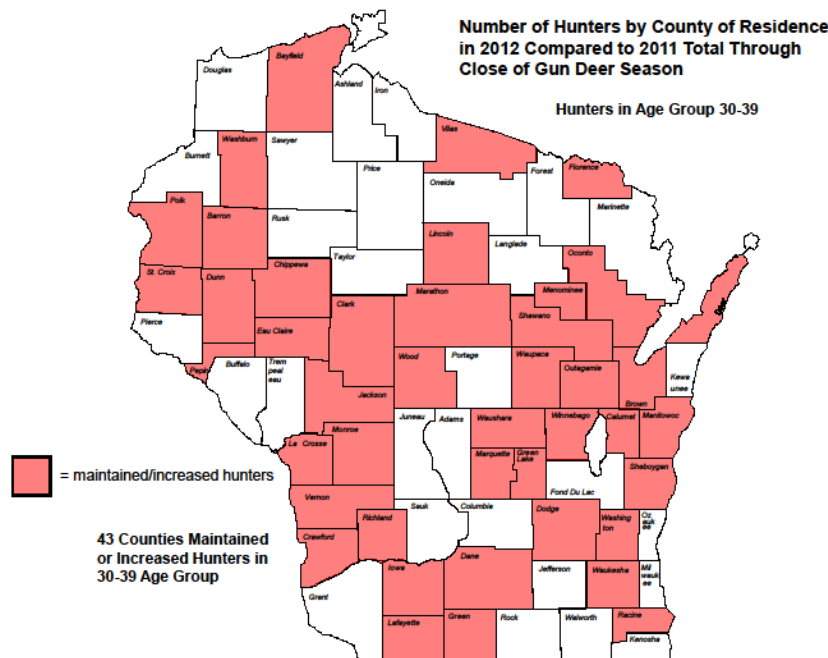
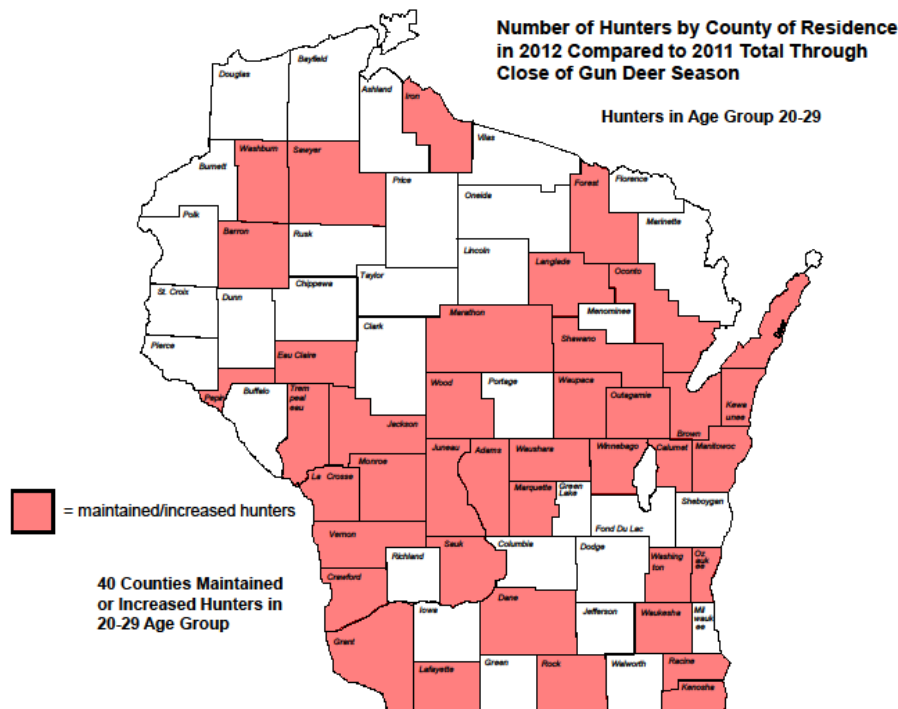
Hunter Challenge

Objective: slow the decline in hunter numbers in age groups 10-19, 20-29, and 30-39 by encouraging hunters to work within their community and their social networks to recruit new hunters, and return lapsed hunters. The specific goals for each age category were:

- 22 counties where the number of 10-19 year-old hunters is stable or increases
- 34 counties where the number of 20-29 year-old hunters is stable or increases
- 20 counties where the number of 30-39 year-old hunters is stable or increases

Results: Age groups 10-19, we had 41 counties maintain or increase hunter numbers (86% over goal); age groups 20-29, we had 40 counties maintain or increase hunter numbers (18% over goal); and age groups 30-39, we had 43 counties maintain or increase hunter numbers (115% over goal). See 3 maps below for counties affected.

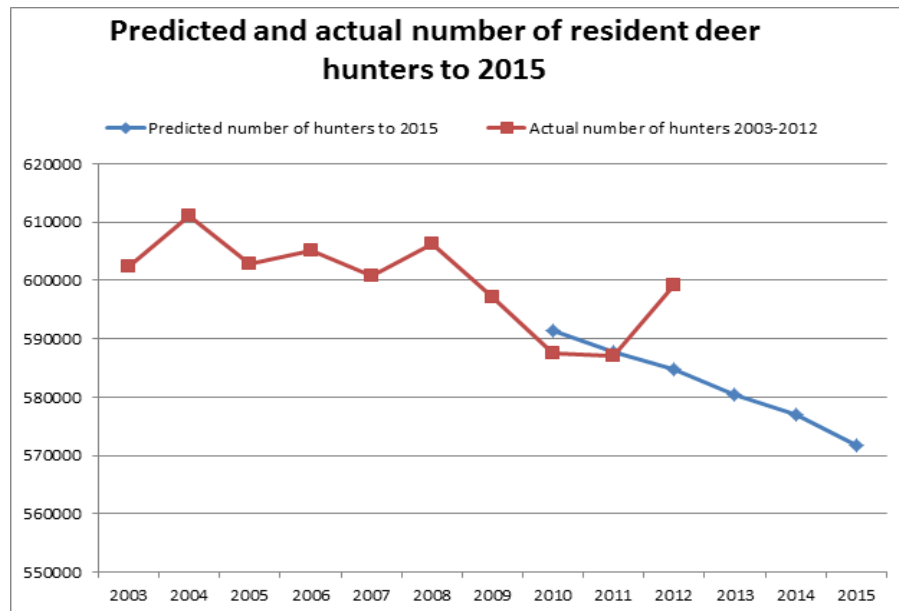




Hunter Numbers are up

Hunter numbers have been predicted to have a steady decline over time and although it is too early to celebrate, hunter numbers are above the predicted decline for FY2013 and hopefully as we collect more information in the years to come this will show a continued positive correlation between our efforts and where we are. Unfortunately there are a

whole host of variables that could be contributing to this increase likely including popular television, demographics, societal changes, economics, and our efforts.



Graph shows one year increase during FY2013 that puts hunter numbers above the predicted decline of Hunters in WI

Tracking LTH Participation

Objective: Track and assess various forms of recruitment programs

Results: Implemented several surveys including a Learn to Hunt survey and we are currently working on long term strategies to better track and measure success.

“Hunting for Sustainability”

Objective: Wisconsin DNR offered a pilot course at Madison College in fall of 2012.

The course was taught by experienced hunters and students/participants were able to experience moral, ethical, sustainable hunting, and conservation. Hunter education certification was offered and students/participants were given the opportunity to try out a mentored hunt.

Results: The pilot course was taught last fall with 20 attendees of which 14 participated in a Learn to Hunt and 6 hunting licenses were sold as a direct result of the course. There are currently 6 hunting for Sustainability course planned for next fiscal year.

First Time Buyers Survey

In an effort to promote and maintain Wisconsin’s robust outdoor heritage, the legislature passed and the Governor signed Act 168 in 2012. The law included a provision to create a discounted license fee of five dollars for “First Time Buyers”. Under the law, those without any prior experience or those who had not bought a particular license in ten years

were eligible for the reduced rate. Ten of thousands of these licenses were sold to customers across a variety of hunting license types last fall, and most were sold adults. We undertook a study of resident, adult buyers of this discounted license to better understand who they are, what they want, and how satisfied they were with their hunting experience. By developing a better understanding of differing market segments within our customer base, we will be better positioned to promote the variety of hunting opportunities available to those with latent, emerging, and existing interest.

We sampled resident, adult buyers of the “First-time” small game, gun deer, archery, and fall turkey licenses in 2012. A hybrid online/mail survey was administered to more than 5,000 hunters in late April and May. We obtained a 35% response rate which is lower than desired. Analysis of respondents indicated that younger buyers (those aged 18-29) were underrepresented in this study, despite the initial invitation to a web survey. Reported data are corrected through a weighting procedure to address this particular limitation, but other sources on non-response bias cannot be completely ruled out.

The major findings of the study are these:

Most buyers (83%) were unaware of their eligibility for the license discount until the moment of transaction. In other words, there were other reasons influencing their purchase decision besides price last fall.

- Among the 17% who knew about the discount, a majority indicated that price did play an important role in their decision, but even one in four of these respondents reported they would have bought a license at full price.
 - The DNR website, friends, and family were the top three sources that produced awareness of the discount.
 - The upshot of the awareness findings suggests that the potential for this program to positively affect hunting participation is not yet known.
- We estimate that 13% of the “First time” adults represent brand new hunters, the remaining 87% are comprised a combination of long-term dormant (or lapsed hunters) as well as regular-annual license buyers that were expanding into additional types of hunting.
 - The highest frequency of new hunters (28%) was found among the gun-deer license holders.
 - Fifty-one percent of all new hunters across license types were women; and women made up 22% of all respondents.
 - Fall turkey buyers had the highest proportion of existing hunters who were trying something new.
 - Small game hunters were also made up of more experienced hunters though many had not been small game hunting in over 15 years.

- Most first time buyers of all types were or satisfied or very satisfied with their hunting experience last fall.
 - Gun deer hunters and archery deer hunters showed the HIGHEST satisfaction levels among the four groups.
- Most study respondents indicated an intention to purchase the same hunting license again, even when informed of the regular price of that license.
 - Archery deer buyers: 56% “very likely”, 23% “likely”
 - Gun deer buyers: 50% “very likely”, 29% “likely”
 - Fall turkey buyers: 46% “very likely”, 23% “likely”
 - Small game buyers: 44% “very likely”, 32% “likely”
- Variations occurred in the motivations and reason for purchasing the hunting license last year among groups and these differences provide implications for marketing hunting. Examples include:
 - We found many buyers were former residents returning to the state or hunters from other states moving in (perhaps as high as 15%)
 - Friends and family play an important role in inviting both new and lapsed hunters to join them.
 - Friends are particularly influential to both small game and gun deer hunters.
 - Women gun deer hunters are strongly motivated to spend time with their significant others.
 - Most hunters motivated to spend time with family have a particular person or person(s) in mind when making their decision to go.
 - Certain motivations are widely shared among groups but subtle variations should be noted.
 - Small game hunters were less likely to be motivated to get food than other groups; they were likely to seek time with friends in nature, and exercise.
 - Archery hunters, especially younger and newer ones, were more likely to be motivated by challenge or trophies than were other groups.
 - Adults, both new hunters and returning ones, show distinct “windows of opportunity” to participate when their children reach hunting age and again after children have grown. In the former case, interest in hunting on the part of the child has in some cases initiated interest on the part of the parent to take up hunting.
- Finally, past license purchasing histories identified potential growth opportunities for various license types in the state and can be used to think about new ways of creatively bundling products (e.g., a combination archery/ fall turkey tag).

- Follow-up evaluation should continue to track these and future buyers of the discounted license to improve our knowledge base to better serve our customers.

Public Shooting Range Renovation Update

Renovations are in full swing for four public land shooting ranges like Caywood range in Vilas County, the McMiller range in Waukesha County, and Yellowstone range in Lafayette County. Several more public range projects are in the works including Northwoods range in Iron County and Owen Anderson range in Barron County.

Improvements underway for the Yellowstone range in Lafayette County in FY2013 and completed in 14 include a new parking area, shooting platforms, side berms, and backstops for the 100 and 50 yard ranges and a new 25 foot range is being added as well. Pittman-Robertson excise tax money was used to cover the renovation costs including shooting benches, gating, and signage.



Yellowstone Shooting Range (Lafayette County) earthwork in progress



50 Yard range at Yellowstone Just needs a few final touches



Covered shooting benches near completion at Yellowstone



Yellowstone Shooting Range (Lafayette County) Handicap accessible shooting benches at 100 yard range

Looking Ahead – Plans for FY2014

Meeting in TWS October 7th 2013

WDNR and Michigan State University, along with current partners Minnesota and Michigan DNR, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, and Michigan members of the Boone and Crockett Club, are hosting a meeting called "Food for Thought: Hunting as a Connection to Nature Through the Food We Eat". This meeting will take place during The Wildlife Society Conference in Milwaukee, WI on October 7, 2013. Our expected outcomes are: 1. The first framework and strategies to recruit adults into hunting that will be developed with the expertise and experience from this new subset of adult hunters "Locavores"; and 2. A network of interested, engaged state and federal agencies to carry forward with implementation.

Shift towards adults, families and female hunters

Although we plan to continue to recruit young hunters (under 18) we have started focusing more attention on adults, families and female hunters. There is an immediate benefit to getting non hunting adults into hunting. They are not dependent on parents to get them into the field and they often have a disposable income to put towards hunting,

Shooting range grant program

More and higher-quality shooting opportunities for the public are expected thanks to a state cost-share grant program for public and private shooting ranges. The dollars for the

Shooting Range Grant Program come from the Pittman-Robertson fund supported by a 10 to 11 percent excise tax on firearms and ammunition. This grant program will help range operators and clubs provide high quality shooting opportunities to the public.

The [Shooting Range Grant Program](#) can cost share up to 50 percent of approved renovation and development costs at private ranges and up to 75 percent at publicly owned ranges. Counties, cities, villages, townships, other governmental agencies or units, clubs or organizations, businesses or corporations and educational institutions are eligible for this program. Eligible projects include but are not limited to: backstops, berms, target holders, baffles, gun racks, signs, field courses, benches, trap and skeet houses, platforms, sanitary facilities, classrooms, protective fencing, storage areas, shelters, parking, accessible pathways and support facilities. Project costs must be commensurate with benefit. Indoor range projects will be considered for funding at the department's discretion.

Grant winners' ranges must be open to the public (non-members) a minimum of 100 days per year. Range operators may charge a reasonable fee during the open hours.

The deadline for applications will be September 1 of odd-numbered years. The amount available will be determined by the DNR secretary and will vary with funding conditions. Applicants will be notified of grant decisions by December 1.

The few public ranges in southern Wisconsin are heavily used and in addition to looking to build new public ranges, we believe that by partnering with private ranges, we can expand access to shooting and improve the facilities for everyone who uses them.

Background

Hunting provides essential components necessary for long-term and effective natural resource conservation including providing a mechanism to manage wildlife populations, funding for management, and a valuable connection to the natural world in an increasingly urbanized society. However, the total number of hunters (residents and non-residents with any hunting license) Wisconsin DNR reported to the federal government has declined from 770,000 in 2000 to about 704,000 in 2011.

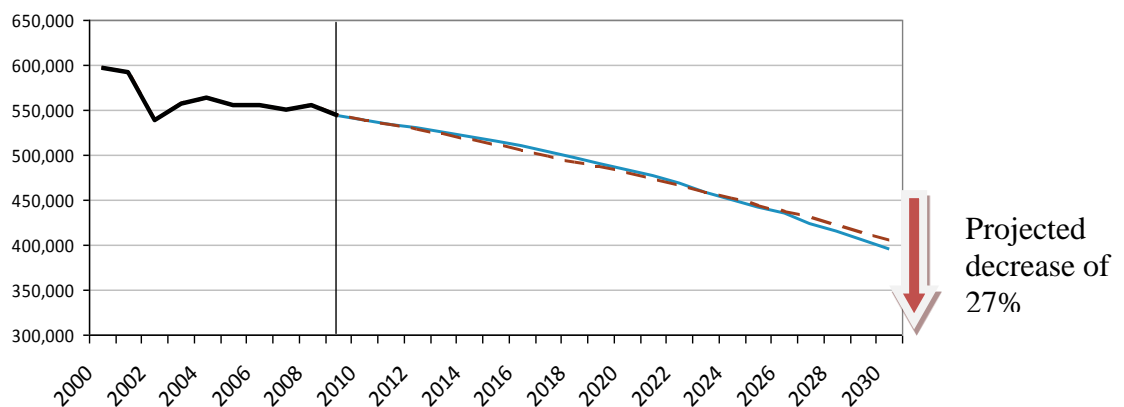
A [2011 demographic study](#) completed by the University of Wisconsin's Applied Population Laboratory in conjunction with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources projected the male gun deer hunter population, which comprised 91% of Wisconsin's gun deer licenses buyers, will decline over the next twenty years. Overall, the model suggests that in 2020, the number of resident male gun hunters will drop to about 480,000 (compared to 549,505 in 2010) and if the current patterns continue, the number could drop to 400,000 or fewer by 2030.

The evidence clearly indicates that we are at the beginning of a decline in number of hunters in Wisconsin. The decrease in the number of hunters will undoubtedly have negative repercussions on natural resource conservation if efforts are not taken to stem the tide.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has a long history of promoting safe and accessible hunting and shooting opportunities including a commitment to provide ranges on public lands and a shooting range grant program to assist in maintenance and development on private ranges in exchange for some public access. There are an estimated 600-900 shooting ranges in Wisconsin and 13 on public land open and open to the public.

In response to identifying these trends, WDNR has supported a number of programmatic and planning actions to build capacity for enhancing participation in hunting, such as encouraging wardens and wildlife staff to include mentoring and organizing events in their annual work plans, and a Hunting and Shooting Sports Coordinator position was added in 2011 to catalyze and coordinate on-going initiatives including the Learn to Hunt and Shooting Sports programs.

Projected number of Wisconsin resident male gun deer hunters 2012-2030.



You can get involved!

We need your help to meet these goals and protect our hunting and shooting heritage. For more information contact Keith Warnke, Learn to Hunt Coordinator, at 608-576-5243 or keith.warnke@wisconsin.gov.

